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ABSTRACT

Using a question and answer format, this booklet explains state high school graduation requirements for classified special education students in New Jersey. Classified pupils must meet all state and local graduation requirements unless exempted in their individualized educational programs (IEPs). Fulfilling IEP requirements qualifies a classified pupil for a state-endorsed diploma. IEPs for classified students entering high school should be updated by both elementary/junior high and high school IEP team members to specifically address all graduation requirement components. Questions are answered pertaining to all five components: (1) state minimum basic skills examinations; (2) minimum curriculum requirements; (3) attendance policies; (4) credit hours; and (5) additional local school district requirements. (BS)

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Classified Pupils and High School Graduation Requirements in New Jersey: Questions and Answers

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Classified Pupils
and
High School Graduation Requirements in New Jersey
Questions and Answers

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Q. MUST CLASSIFIED PUPILS MEET STATE AND LOCAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS?

A. Yes. Classified pupils must meet all state and local graduation requirements unless exempted in their individualized education programs (IEPs) such as exemption from the Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) testing requirement. The IEP must specifically address state and local graduation requirements. Fulfillment of the IEP requirements would qualify a classified pupil for a state-endorsed diploma.

Q. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS?

A. There are five major components:

1. Basic Skills - A student must pass state minimum basic skills examinations in reading, writing and computation. The examination will first be administered to ninth grade students in the spring of 1982. It is unknown at this time when the writing component will be administered.

2. Curriculum - Minimum curricular proficiencies are required for all students in the areas of communication, computation, social studies and history, science, health and physical education, fine, practical or performing arts and career exploration. There is a minimum core requirement for all students. However, these requirements may be met in different ways for different students in different programs.

3. Attendance Policies - Local districts have established attendance policies appropriate to each program or course of study.

4. Credit Hours - The existing credit hour requirements are continued, which are 69 credit units for a three-year high school and 92 credit hours for a four-year high school.

5. Local Requirements - Local districts may establish requirements exceeding those required in law and state regulation.

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Q. MUST CLASSIFIED PUPILS MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF ALL FIVE COMPONENTS?

A. Yes, unless the IEP indicates an exemption. The IEP must address all five components. As stated previously, fulfillment of the IEP requirements would qualify a pupil for a state-endorsed diploma.

Q. CAN A CLASSIFIED PUPIL BE EXEMPTED FROM ALL FIVE COMPONENTS?

A. Yes. In general, however, this would occur only with severely handicapped pupils who are in totally self-contained special education settings.

Q. DO THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO ALL CLASSIFIED PUPILS PRESENTLY ENROLLED IN HIGH SCHOOL?

A. Not at this time. The requirements affect only those classified pupils who entered ninth grade in the fall of 1981. Those pupils who entered high school programs prior to the fall of 1981 will not be affected.

Q. DO THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO CLASSIFIED PUPILS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND STATE-OPERATED PROGRAMS AS WELL?

A. Yes. The requirements apply to all classified pupils regardless of placement unless exempted in their IEPs. Therefore, IEPs for those students must address the five components of the requirements, beginning with pupils entering ninth grade programs in the fall of 1981.

Q. WHO DETERMINES WHICH GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS A STUDENT MUST MEET?

A. The IEP participants who are mandated in NJAC 6:28-1.8 determine the graduation requirements for a classified pupil. Participants include: the basic child study team, one or both parents, teacher(s) having knowledge of the pupil's educational performance, and the pupil, when appropriate.

Q. MUST AN UPDATED IEP BE DEVELOPED FOR CLASSIFIED STUDENTS ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL?

A. Yes. The IEP must be reviewed and revised at least annually or more often if necessary. Movement into a high school program, even if it occurs during the one year period of an existing IEP, warrants a

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review and revision of the IEP, especially with regard to the high school graduation requirements. Members of both the elementary/junior high and high school teams should participate in the IEP development. (Note question below.)

Q. WHEN A CLASSIFIED PUPIL IS ABOUT TO ENTER A HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM, WHICH CHILD STUDY TEAM PARTICIPATES IN THE IEP DEVELOPMENT, THE ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH TEAM OR THE HIGH SCHOOL TEAM?

A. It is recommended that both the elementary team and representative(s) of the high school team participate. Close communication must exist between the elementary/junior high school levels and the high school to insure informed, appropriate decision-making regarding the pupil's IEP before he/she enters the high school educational program. If members of both teams cannot meet, then the elementary/junior high team should develop the IEP since it has direct knowledge of the pupil which the high school team does not possess. Accordingly, the elementary/junior high team should have thorough knowledge of the high school setting the pupil will be entering. It then becomes the responsibility of the high school team to review, approve or revise the IEP prior to implementation.

Q. IF A CLASSIFIED HIGH SCHOOL PUPIL IS MAINSTREAMED, MUST THE IEP ADDRESS BOTH SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REGULAR EDUCATION?

A. Yes. The IEP must address the special education programming and any exemption or modification to the regular education requirements. If a pupil does not need individualized educational planning in a regular education class(es), the IEP need not address such programming. However, unless an exemption or modification is specifically stated in the IEP, the pupil must meet the high school graduation requirements in the same manner as a non-classified pupil.

II. BASIC SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

Q. MUST CLASSIFIED PUPILS SUCCESSFULLY PASS THE STATE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST ADMINISTERED IN 9TH GRADE?

A. Yes, unless exempted in their IEPs. The exemption is determined at the IEP conference and must be specifically noted in writing within the IEP document. To accommodate classified pupils in the Minimum Basic Skills Testing Programs, the Department of Education has developed the following:

1. Guidelines for Including Classified Students in the Minimum Basic Skills Testing Program - Although the content of the Minimum Basic Skills test must remain the

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same, procedures and answer modes can be changed to accommodate classified students. This document describes all allowable test modifications that may be used when testing classified students.

2. Suggested Procedures for Reviewing Individualized Education Programs for Inclusion/Exclusion Decisions - This document describes variables which should be considered when reviewing students' Individualized Education Programs for inclusion/exclusion decisions.

3. Braille and Large Print Versions of the Minimum Basic Skills Tests - The Minimum Basic Skills tests are available in braille and large print. Items that were measuring visual skills have been removed from the braille version. These tests are distributed by the Commission for the Blind and are available to any student registered with the Commission.

4. Modified Mathematics Tests for Auditorily Handicapped Students - The mathematics tests for grades three and six have been modified to accommodate auditorily handicapped students. The language of the test has been changed to correspond to the language patterns of these students. These can be obtained from the Office of State Educational Assessment, 222 West State Street, Room 200, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

5. Answer Sheet Code Changes - Classified students included in the Minimum Basic Skills Program will not have their results aggregated with the rest of the population if they are coded SE (Special Education) in their answer sheets. This coding has been extended to include twelve ovals. Each oval corresponds to a specific classification. Reports summarizing results of classified students by classification are available.

Q. MAY A CLASSIFIED PUPIL BE IN A BASIC SKILLS REMEDIAL PROGRAM (TITLE I OR STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAM)?

A. Yes. Classified pupils may be enrolled in such programs provided that they meet the eligibility criteria. Enrollment in such programs must not supplant special education programming if the pupil's learning problems warrant services as mandated by NJAC 6:28-1.1 et seq. In no instance would dual reimbursement be allowed.

Q. MUST A CLASSIFIED PUPIL IN A BASIC SKILLS REMEDIAL PROGRAM BE REQUIRED TO HAVE AN INDIVIDUAL STUDENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ISIP)?

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A. No. The IEP should include the instructional needs being addressed in such remedial programs.

III. CURRICULUM AND PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS

Q. MUST PROFICIENCY STATEMENTS BE DEVELOPED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, i.e. RESOURCE ROOM PROGRAMS, EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED PROGRAMS, TRAINABLE PROGRAMS, ETC.?

A. No. Each student's individual program in such classes is stipulated in the IEP, including goals, objectives and evaluative criteria.

Q. IF A CLASSIFIED PUPIL IS MAINSTREAMED INTO REGULAR CLASSES MUST HE/SHE MEET THE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS OF THOSE COURSES?

A. Yes, unless the IEP exempts the pupil or indicates modifications to the course proficiencies. Therefore, IEP participants must know what the proficiency requirements are in order to determine the extent to which the pupil can be included in regular education courses, and if exemption/modification is necessary.

Q. MAY A CLASSIFIED PUPIL BE EXEMPTED FROM ALL PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS OF A REGULAR EDUCATION COURSE(S)?

A. While this is possible, it should occur only when the nature of the pupil's educational needs clearly warrant such action. A clearly stated rationale should be included in the IEP to explain why such placement is being recommended. Alternative proficiencies must be developed and stated in the IEP.

Q. IF EXEMPTION OR MODIFICATION OF PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS IS DETERMINED, MUST THE IEP INDICATE ALTERNATIVE PROFICIENCY STATEMENTS?

A. Yes. In addition to stating alternative proficiencies, the IEP should provide a rationale explaining why exemption/modification(s) has been deemed necessary.

Q. IF A CLASSIFIED PUPIL IS ATTENDING AN OUT-OF-DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM AND IS MAINSTREAMED INTO REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSES, MUST HE/SHE MEET THE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOL ATTENDED OR OF THE RESIDENT DISTRICT?

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A. The pupil would be required to meet the proficiency requirements of the courses he/she is attending unless exempted in the IEP. Since each district has adopted its own proficiency standards, the resident district child study team personnel should know the exact proficiencies set by the out-of-district high school for the regular education courses the pupil may attend so that appropriate decisions can be made.

Q. MUST PUPILS CLASSIFIED AS CHRONICALLY ILL BY THE SCHOOL PHYSICIAN MEET THE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSES BEING TAKEN WHILE SUCH CLASSIFICATION IS IN EFFECT?

A. Yes, unless exempted in the IEP. Therefore, it is essential that the IEP participants, as mandated by NJAC 6:28-1.8(k), be aware of the proficiency requirements the pupil is expected to meet during the time the classification is in effect. Such awareness will allow an appropriate determination as to what exemptions or modifications may be warranted. When an exemption/modification may appear necessary, it is recommended that a child study team member be present when the IEP is developed.

Q. MUST CLASSIFIED PUPILS MEET THE CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS, i.e. ONE YEAR OF COMMUNICATION FOR EACH YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL, TWO YEARS OF COMPUTATION, ETC.?

A. Yes, unless exempted in their IEPs. While exemption is possible, it should be granted only when it is clearly indicated that the pupil cannot meet the curriculum requirements set by the state and/or local district. The IEP should specifically state what curriculum requirements are being met by the pupil's IEP and, if exemption has been granted, the IEP should stipulate alternative curriculum requirements.

IV. CREDIT HOURS

Q. MUST CLASSIFIED PUPILS MEET THE CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS?

A. Yes, unless exempted by their IEPs.

Q. MUST CREDIT HOURS BE ASSIGNED TO CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES IN A RESOURCE ROOM PROGRAM?

A. Yes. The IEP should state specifically both the curriculum requirement being met through resource room programming and the credit hours assigned to that programming.

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Q. MUST CREDIT HOURS BE ASSIGNED TO CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSES?

A. If credit hours have been exempted, this would not be necessary. Where appropriate, the IEP should state what credit hours and curriculum requirements are being met. Such a procedure makes transcript reporting consistent with reporting of regular students and facilitates transfer from one district to another.

V. ATTENDANCE

Q. MUST A CLASSIFIED PUPIL MEET THE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS SET BY THE LOCAL DISTRICT?

A. Yes, unless exempted in their IEPs. If exemption is granted, the IEP should clearly state the rationale for such action and stipulate alternative requirements.

VI. LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Q. WHAT DOES "LOCAL REQUIREMENTS" MEAN?

A. Local requirements are those set by the local district board of education which exceed or go beyond the graduation requirements set by the state.

Q. MAY A CLASSIFIED PUPIL BE EXEMPTED FROM LOCAL REQUIREMENTS?

A. Yes. In most instances, however, this is necessary because these additional requirements often represent elective course work.

VII. GRADUATION AND DIPLOMAS

Q. WILL CLASSIFIED PUPILS RECEIVE THE SAME DIPLOMA AS NON-CLASSIFIED PUPILS?

A. Yes. Only one type of high school diploma is allowed: a state endorsed diploma. Certificates of attendance, general diplomas or any other type of certificate/diploma cannot be issued. Fulfillment of the IEP requirements qualifies the classified pupils for a state-endorsed diploma.

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Q. MAY DIPLOMAS CARRY NOTATIONS SUCH AS "SPECIAL EDUCATION?"

A. No. Special Education notations are not compatible with regulations and violate the spirit of special education laws.

Q. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN A STUDENT IS "DECLASSIFIED" IN THE ELEVENTH OR TWELFTH GRADE? DOES HE/SHE HAVE TO GRADUATE UNDER THE REGULAR PROVISIONS?

A. The IEP requirements successfully completed by the student prior to declassification represent the graduation requirements the student has already met. The proper program for graduation must be determined as part of the declassification process. This program must be based on the characteristics of the particular student, and must stipulate the remaining requirements the student must meet for graduation.

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